Church Hits CIA Data Flow

6.24.75

By Spencer Rich
and Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writers

Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho) accused the White House yesterday of failing to produce key documents for a Senate committee investigation of alleged CIA assassination plots against foreign leaders from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s.

"We have not yet received from the White House materials that we have requested that have been promised to the committee," Church said after a two-hour closed meeting of the CIA investigating committee he heads.

Roderick Hills, counsel to the President, called Church's statement "unfortunate" and "unexpected."

Declaring that "nobody has complained to me," Hills said that "we are producing materials as fast as we can . . . We were complimented by senators who came to the White House over the weekend to read materials."

Before Church's criticism, White House press secretary Ron Nessen announced that all of the raw materials on CIA involvement in alleged assassination plots collected by the Rockefeller commission probe of the CIA had been made available to the Church panel.

The argument between Church and the White House apparently centers not on the Rockefeller commission materials but on what Church called "actual minutes of the National Security Council and of . . . the Special Group that had control" of convert CIA operations.

Committee aides said later that some of these documents have been viewed by members of the committee, but none had been made available to the committee for use by its staff on Capitol Hill.

Without the documents, Church said, the committee could not proceed with its investigation or questioning of witnesses.

The committee, focusing on the question of whether the CIA was involved in assassination plans against foreign leaders like Cuba's Fidel Castro, is trying to determine whether any of the Presidents holding office during the pe-

See CIA, A10, Col. 1

CIA, From A1

riod in question—Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy or Lyndon B. Johnson—had given actual orders for plans to be drawn up or executed.

It is trying to work out the "chain of command" between the Presidents and the CIA.

It had scheduled a week of hearings with key figures in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations who might have been part of such a chain of command or might have had knowledge of it—former national security affairs adviser McGeorge Bundy, whose appearance yesterday was canceled, former national security affairs adviser Walt Whitman Rostow, former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Maxwell Taylor, former Secretary of State Dean Rusk and former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara.

Church said that until the documents are forthcoming, all of the appearances of these witnesses may have to be postponed. The committee will proceed today, however, with closed-door questioning of alleged mob figure John Roselli and on Wednesday with questioning of former CIA agent William Harvey.

Church said he wasn't accusing the President of deliberately withholding the documents, but while the committee has received considerable materials, White House aides had been holding back some of the most crucial NSC minutes. The aides the committee is dealing with are Hills and Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, deputy assistant to the President for national security affairs.

"They tell us they're reviewing it," said Church. "I don't charge at this time bad faith because I don't believe the President . . . can be countermanded by subordinates."

He said, "If necessary, Sen. Tower and I will ask for another appointment with the President." Sen. John Tower of Texas is the committee's senior Republican.

Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.), another committee member, said later, "The White House has not produced the documentation we need. I don't know why—maybe it's just bureaucratic inertia . . . clearly there is some internal resistance. I take the President at face value and I believe we'll get it."

Four Senators and several committee staff members visited the White House situation room over the weekend to read the Rockefeller Commission raw materials, Nessen said.

He announced that the commission materials would be available to the Church committee at the White House at any time of the day or night. When the Senate committee is in session, the material will be taken to the committee by a guard and then returned at the end of the day, Nessen said.

Nessen said that all the transcripts of testimony taken by the Rockefeller commission from 51 witnesses have been made available to the committee. The 85-page summary report the commisssion prepared for the President on alleged assassination involvement has been opened to committee members, Nessen said.

In discussing the NSC minutes and records of the Special Group (a collection of high policy officials from the White House, Defense and State departments that had a policy role in deciding on proposed CIA operations), Church and Baker said they relied on President Ford's word, given publicly June 10, that he would give the committee materials from the Rockefeller commission "plus any other material that is in the executive branch."

Baker said that it was evident that some of the materials being sought for the years at issue were missing from the files shown the committee so far.